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99 Measures of Assessment Processes and Practice for use in Benchmarking and Reviewing Teaching and Learning

Developed by the Assessment for Teaching & Learning Audit
Benchmarks (ATLAB) Project

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This report details a list of 99 indicators of assessment process and practice derived from existing e-learning benchmarks, literature about assessment and staff consultation. These indicators have a number of uses including use in:

- **Benchmarking against good practice,**
- **Benchmarking across the university and between modules,**
- **Benchmarking against other national or international universities,**
- **Setting baselines,**
- **Module review, (re)design and development,**
- **Supporting continuous improvement initiatives ,**
- **Staff development and awareness raising,**
- **Contrasting student expectations and experience of assessment with staff perceptions.**

Existing papers posted on the Open Research Online (ORO) system refer to these indicators so this document is intended as a companion to this work. The composition, development and pilot of these indicator measures is discussed in:

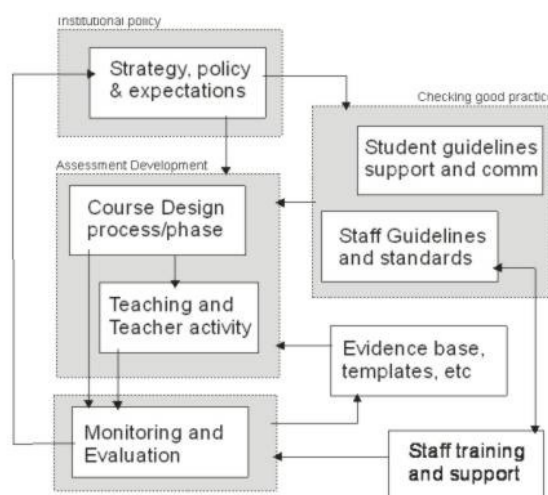
Whitelock, Denise and Cross, Simon (2011). Assessment Benchmarking: accumulating and accelerating institutional know-how for best practice, IJEA, [Forthcoming to ORO](#)

Cross, Simon and Whitelock, Denise (2010). Benchmarking assessment: breaking down barriers and building institutional understanding. In: *2010 International Computer Assisted Assessment (CAA) Conference*, 20-21 July 2010, Southampton, UK. <http://oro.open.ac.uk/22928/>

Benchmarking offers a comprehensive way of measuring current practice in an institution whilst also gauging achievement against external standards or competitors. Although attempts have been made to benchmark e-learning across a number of universities in the UK (Bacsich 2005, Marshall 2006; Higher Education Academy 2009), no one to date has tackled the area of assessment. We believe with the advent of more e-assessment, changing pedagogies and greater emphasis on learning (and assessment) designing that this area merits further investigation.

The ATLAB measures aim to cover the full range of processes and practices required for designing, delivering, supporting and measuring assessment. The relationship between the headlines measures is shown in Figure below and reveals that the measures probe three main areas that affect Assessment practice. These are:

- Institutional Policy,
- Assessment development,
- Checking Good Practice (which not only deals with Quality assurance Measures but also includes staff training and support).
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It must be stressed that the value to using these measures is in the discussion, reflection, review of current practice and future planning that they promote; not just in ascertaining a 'score'. This would likely include the sharing of good practice and identification of gaps or differences in perceptions across staff groups. In checking on good practice, such measures will also reflect how an institution is engaging in practices such as redesigning approaches that leverage the use of new technologies.

The indicator measures defined are grouped in to 7 categories:

| Category | Number of measures in category |
|--|--------------------------------|
| A1. Teaching and teaching activity | 17 |
| A2. Student guidelines, support and communications | 14 |
| A3. Monitoring, measurement and evaluation | 13 |
| A4. Staff training and support | 14 |
| A5. Evidence base, templates and examples | 11 |
| A6. Course design process and phases | 16 |
| A7. Strategy, policy, guidelines and standards | 14 |

The project aims are two-fold:

- To develop and disseminate a comprehensive set of measures,
- To create a tool that can capture the practices and effectiveness of processes associated with assessment

An example of how these could be used is given in Appendix 1. Our papers discuss in more detail the process of development, piloting and evaluating the measures.

A1 Assessment is used effectively in teaching and learning activity

| Key <i>F = Fully occurring</i> <i>M = Mostly occurring</i> <i>P = Partially occurring</i> <i>N = Not occurring</i> <i>X = Not in a position to say</i> | To what extent you think this practice or process is going on at the OU | What should be the minimal acceptable level of practice or process at the university |
|--|---|--|
| a) Assessment of individual student capabilities are undertaken before or early in the course, and used to guide teaching during the remainder of the course | | |
| b) Assessment marking rubrics are written and used | | |
| c) Students are able to integrate previous experience and knowledge into assessment activities and tasks | | |
| d) All marking rubrics are shared with students in advance and feedback refers to them | | |
| e) Students have opportunities to discuss assessment tasks and try any associated e-learning technology before attempting marked work | | |
| f) There are mechanisms for students to be provided with feedback beyond the marks assigned for assessed work | | |
| g) Feedback is given that addresses motivation and encourages positive motivational beliefs and esteem | | |
| h) Students have opportunities for a feedback dialogue (peer or teacher-student) around assessment tasks on the course | | |
| i) Feedback is intended to acknowledge, consolidate and promote student learning | | |
| j) Students get feedback which corrects errors and supplies further information | | |
| k) Students have sufficient opportunities to describe, assess and reflect on their own learning and make comparisons against their own goals | | |
| l) Assessment activities and tasks develop students responsibility for their own learning | | |
| m) Students have opportunities to select or chose aspects of assessment (such as topics for extended essays or project work) | | |
| n) Students have opportunities for cooperative and collaborative assessment | | |
| o) Assessment includes the use of a portfolio or similar practice | | |
| p) Assessment activities are situated within real-world contexts (i.e. they reflect the problems, tasks or competencies a practitioner would face) | | |
| q) Multiple choice assessments are used and integrated | | |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| into the assessment strategy | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|

A2 Students are provided with appropriate guidelines, support and communication

| Key <i>F = Fully occurring</i> <i>M = Mostly occurring</i> <i>P = Partially occurring</i> <i>N = Not occurring</i> <i>X = Not in a position to say</i> | To what extent you think this practice or process is going on at the OU | What should be the minimal acceptable level of practice or process at the university |
|---|---|--|
| a) The programme of assessment and timescale is given to students at the outset | | |
| b) The relationship between individual assessment tasks and other learning activities is made clear to students | | |
| c) A variety of communication channels are used to provide feedback to students | | |
| d) Students are given an explicit description of the pedagogical approach and assessment forms being used | | |
| e) Students are told what quality of feedback they can expect and when and how they will receive it | | |
| f) Students receive substantive feedback on their individual performance in assessment tasks is built into the course | | |
| g) Guidance about intellectual property and plagiarism issues and policies is given to students | | |
| h) Students are given guidelines and materials about how to effectively use the feedback staff provide | | |
| i) Students are given support, guidelines and materials to help them in self-assessment and reflection | | |
| j) The relationships between the individual components and assessment activities within courses are made explicit to students | | |
| k) Students are provided with practice sessions or tutorials in using e-learning assessment technologies | | |
| l) Students have opportunities to engage actively with assessment goals, criteria and standard setting | | |
| m) students are formally consulted about assessment during the design process | | |
| n) Decisions about how to communicate with students take into account student satisfaction with the quality, nature and process of assessment and feedback | | |

A3 Monitoring, measuring and evaluation of students and staff is integral to the use of assessment

| Key <i>F = Fully occurring</i> <i>M = Mostly occurring</i> <i>P = Partially occurring</i> <i>N = Not occurring</i> <i>X = Not in a position to say</i> | To what extent you think this practice or process is going on at the OU | What should be the minimal acceptable level of practice or process at the university |
|---|---|--|
| a) The extent to which feedback is given to a student is measured and collected | | |
| b) The range and use of formative assessment techniques are measured and collected | | |
| c) Changes in assessment that occur because of student feedback and evaluation is monitored and reported | | |
| d) An evaluation plan accompanies the introduction of all new assessment / e-learning technologies or pedagogies | | |
| e) Student feedback on the learning support they have and the feedback provided is regularly collected | | |
| f) Student feedback on the robustness and reliability of the assessment infrastructure and technology is regularly collected | | |
| g) Student feedback on the role and effectiveness of the assessment infrastructure and technology is regularly collected | | |
| h) Student feedback on the assessment pedagogies used by staff is regularly collected | | |
| i) Regular staff feedback is collected about how effective they feel the support and training they receive is | | |
| j) Staff feedback on the infrastructure, technical support and technology used in student assessment is regularly collected | | |
| k) Staff feedback is collected on the quality and effectiveness of the student assessment experience | | |
| l) There is regular collection and reporting of the capability/capacity of staff to teach using assessment pedagogies and technologies | | |
| m) Feedback is collected on the use of any technology or media that is not formally designed in to the course | | |

A4 Training and support for staff is provided to address skills and understanding of assessment

| Key F = Fully occurring M = Mostly occurring P = Partially occurring N = Not occurring X = Not in a position to say | To what extent you think this practice or process is going on at the OU | What should be the minimal acceptable level of practice or process at the university |
|---|---|--|
| a) Staff are helped to use learning objectives explicitly in the <i>design</i> of assessment | | |
| b) Staff are supported in using learning objectives explicitly in the <i>delivery</i> of assessment | | |
| c) Staff are encouraged to understand and use a variety of effective assessment tasks and strategies | | |
| d) Staff are able to support students in avoiding plagiarism and violations of intellectual property, and to correctly use information created by other students or accessed electronically | | |
| e) Staff are helped in using formative assessment for feedback and feed-forward to improve student learning | | |
| f) Staff understand how to support and promote active engagement in assessment by students | | |
| g) Staff are trained in how to assess students capabilities for learning and how to use this to plan formative assessment strategy | | |
| h) Staff are advised on how to design e-learning assessment programmes which mix formative and summative assessment | | |
| i) Staff are helped in achieving incremental development of student skills through effective assessment tasks and strategies | | |
| j) Exchange of experience and good practice is promoted between staff | | |
| k) Institutional strategies and technology plans make adequate provision for staff support in relation to assessment | | |
| l) There is a process to consider any requests for support from staff attempting assessment | | |
| m) Regular review of staff training is undertaken including the use of student satisfaction with assessment tasks and structures | | |
| n) The design, (re)development and delivery of assessment is supported by teams of specialist staff such as teaching and learning professionals | | |

A5 Assessment is founded upon and references a researched evidence base and staff are provided with examples and templates

| Key <i>F = Fully occurring</i> <i>M = Mostly occurring</i> <i>P = Partially occurring</i> <i>N = Not occurring</i> <i>X = Not in a position to say</i> | To what extent you think this practice or process is going on at the OU | What should be the minimal acceptable level of practice or process at the university |
|---|---|--|
| a) A regular audit of the assessment formats, technologies and pedagogies used in courses is made and reported | | |
| b) Assessment design and (re)development activities reference a researched evidence base | | |
| c) The institution maintains a researched evidence base and/or case study repository of university assessment practice and related teaching and learning | | |
| d) Information about course assessment is made readily available to others involved in designing or producing the course or other courses. | | |
| e) A regular assessment benchmarking process is carried out by the institution | | |
| f) There is monitoring and reporting of the rate of reuse of assessment materials | | |
| g) There is a managed processes of internal dissemination of good practice and outcomes of institutional e-learning projects and initiatives | | |
| h) Staff are encouraged to locate assessment activities and tasks within an authentic context | | |
| i) Courses are evaluated to ensure that appropriate assessment techniques and formats are used | | |
| j) There is monitoring and reporting of the financial costs and benefits of assessment and providing feedback | | |
| k) There is regular monitoring and review of course compliance with institutional expectations for assessment quality, timing and feedback quality | | |

A6 Assessment is designed for and integral in the process of course and learning design

| Key <i>F = Fully occurring</i> <i>M = Mostly occurring</i> <i>P = Partially occurring</i> <i>N = Not occurring</i> <i>X = Not in a position to say</i> | To what extent you think this practice or process is going on at the OU | What should be the minimal acceptable level of practice or process at the university |
|--|---|--|
| a) Course assessment are designed in respect to the Learning outcomes | | |
| b) Design of assessment closely follows formally developed procedures and standards | | |
| c) Course development and design considers both formative and summative assessment | | |
| d) There is an alignment between formative and summative assessments | | |
| e) Assessment is designed to make effective use of e-learning technologies | | |
| f) A combination of separate formative and summative assessments are used in the course | | |
| g) eLearning technologies are used consistently across the course teaching and assessment strategy | | |
| h) Course assessment is detailed in the course or programme e-learning development plan (if no plan exists answer 'N') | | |
| i) There is a clear and logical relationship between assessment and other timetabled activities and course elements | | |
| j) Course designers consider the disability and accessibility aspects of assessment | | |
| k) Assessment is designed to assist with the development of student skills and capabilities incrementally or in stages through the course | | |
| l) Assessment is designed to assist with the development of student skills and competences for life-long learning | | |
| m) Assessment is designed to help prepare students with the skills and competences necessary to pass external professional assessment | | |
| n) Course designers and writers can articulate and justify the assessment strategies being used in the promotion of learning | | |
| o) Course assessment is designed to support self-assessment by students | | |
| p) Assessment activities are designed to encourage and support students in creating and using electronic information | | |

A7 Assessment is embedded in institutional strategy, policy, guidelines and standards

| Key F = Fully occurring M = Mostly occurring P = Partially occurring N = Not occurring X = Not in a position to say | To what extent you think this practice or process is going on at the OU | What should be the minimal acceptable level of practice or process at the university |
|--|---|--|
| a) Measures of student performance and their satisfaction with feedback are used to inform strategic planning of future assessment initiatives | | |
| b) Teaching staff are encouraged to design e-learning assessment programmes with sufficient time for feedback and student reflection | | |
| c) Risk assessment and mitigation strategies are regularly updated in respect to the changing nature of assessment (staff requirements, technologies used, pedagogies used etc.) | | |
| d) There is a policy and plan covering students access to and/or ownership of necessary technologies for assessment | | |
| e) The experience gained with successful and unsuccessful e-learning initiatives is used to inform strategy and business management | | |
| f) Institutional standards for assessing staff in their effective use of assessment technology and pedagogies are defined and applied | | |
| g) Staff are recognised, rewarded and supported in their work with innovative assessment initiatives or trials | | |
| h) There is coordination of assessment projects, initiatives, policies and strategies across the institution | | |
| i) There are formally defined criteria for the allocation of resources for assessment design, development and delivery | | |
| j) Regular reviews assess risks and costs associated with providing support and training for staff | | |
| k) There is consistency across all institutional guidelines, policies, and standards for assessment | | |
| l) Institutional expectations of the quality and type of feedback to be provided to students are defined and communicated to staff | | |
| m) There are defined institutional processes and standards for assessing the success of new assessment technologies and innovations | | |
| n) Standards for e-learning assessment requirements exist | | |

Appendix 1. Example Survey Methodology

Staff in all roles and at all levels are asked to work through the survey document including: the module/course team, associate lecturers/other teaching staff or support, module/course manager, programme manager, learning systems and resource production teams and library support, Associate Deans, students, and senior management.

Staff are asked to read each statement and tell us to what extent they think the practice or process is going on at the OU. They have five response options:

- **F = Fully** occurring
- **M = Mostly** occurring
- **P = Partially** occurring
- **N = Not** occurring
- **X = I'm not in a position to say**

They then simply write in the first column (next to the statement) the letter relating to the response that you think most accurately describes the situation. E.g. in the example below (shown in blue) the respondent felt that assessment of individual student capabilities etc. was partially going on / occurring at the university. And that Assessment marking rubrics are written and used is fully going on/ occurring.

| | To what extent you think this practice or process is going on at the OU | What should be the minimal acceptable level of practice or process at the university |
|--|---|--|
| a) Assessment of individual student capabilities are undertaken before or early in the course, and used to guide teaching during the remainder of the course | P | F |
| b) Assessment marking rubrics are written and used | F | F |

In the second column staff are asked to tell us instead about what they think should be the minimal acceptable level of practice or process at the university. The emphasis here is on the 'minimal acceptable level'. The same response options as before are used:

- **F = Fully** occurring
- **M = Mostly** occurring
- **P = Partially** occurring
- **N = Not** occurring
- **X = I'm not in a position to say**

It can be stressed to staff that this minimal acceptable level need not always be 'fully occurring'. Indeed, we must also be realistic and practical, so the minimal acceptable level may be 'mostly occurring' or even in some case 'not going on at all.' We appreciate this score is harder to give, but it allows us to understand the expectations and personally benchmarks/standards that staff hold. In our example (above), the respondent believed the minimal acceptable level of practice/process was 'fully going on / occurring' for both measures and has therefore written an 'F' in both boxes (shown in green).

If used with students, the relevant measures would need to be selected (there are around 40 relevant measures) and potentially rephrased. In addition, the final column question could be changed to 'How important is this practice to your learning.'

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